

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2015
INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

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E. O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PN, PFOR, MX
SUBJECT: MEETING OF GOM PRESIDENT LOPEZ PORTILLO WITH GOP
CHIEF TORRIJOS

1. MAJOR MEXICAN DAILIES GAVE BANNER HEADLINE TREATMENT TO THE MAY 6TH MEETING OF PRESIDENT LOPEZ PORTILLO AND GEN OMAR TORRIJOS AT THE MEXICAN RESORT, CANCUN. THE STATED PURPOSE OF THE MEETING WAS FOR GEN. TORRIJOS TO DEBRIEF PRESIDENT LOPEZ PORTILLO ON THE GOP POSITION REGARDING THE NEXT ROUND OF CANAL TALKS WITH THE USG. FOLLOWING TORRIJOS' MEETING WITH LOPEZ PORTILLO, THE PANAMANIAN NEGOTIATING TEAM THAT ACCOMPANIED TORRIJOS TO CANCUN PROCEEDED TO WASHINGTON. THE LEADERS' CONVERSATIONS WERE FRIENDLY AND RESULTED IN A CAREFULLY WORDED EXPRESSION OF MEXICAN SUPPORT FOR PANAMA'S CANAL ASPIRATIONS.

2. AT A JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING THE MEETING, TORRIJOS ANSWERED QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE CANAL'S REGIONAL IMPORTANCE, NEUTRALITY, AND ITS POSSIBLE CLOSURE. TORRIJOS BEGAN BY NOTING WITH FAVOR THAT THE PANAMA CANAL ISSUE IS REGARDED AS A MATTER OF REGIONAL IMPORTANCE. HE
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WAS PLEASED THAT LOPEZ PORTILLO WAS ALREADY WELL-INFORMED ON THE SUBJECT. TORRIJOS SAID THAT THIS INDICATES THE NEGOTIATIONS HAVE MADE PROGRESS AND THAT THE PANAMANIAN CAUSE IS RECEIVING ITS JUST RECOGNITION. ON NEUTRALITY, TORRIJOS DECLARED THAT FROM THE GOP'S STANDPOINT, ALL COUNTRIES WOULD ENJOY EQUAL USE OF THE CANAL, GUARANTEED BY THE UNITED NATIONS. THE US POSITION GOES

BEYOND THAT OF PANAMA. WHILE NOT REJECTING THE USG POSITION, TORRIJOS SAID THAT THE GOP WOULD HAVE TO BE CAREFUL THAT USG-DESIRED SAFEGUARDS NOT PROVIDE A BASIS FOR FUTURE USG INTERVENTION. WHEN ASKED BY A REPORTER IF THE CANAL'S WATER SUPPLY MIGHT BE CUT OFF IF THE NEGOTIATIONS DID NOT BEAR FRUIT, TORRIJOS REPLIED "NOT ONLY WATER, THERE WILL BE NO WATER, NO ELECTRICITY, NO CANAL, AND NO GRINGOS."

3. LOPEZ PORTILLO NOTED THAT THE GOM SUPPORTS THE GOP'S POSITION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF "SELF-DETERMINATION AND DIGNITY", CONCEPTS AS IMPORTANT AS "HUMAN RIGHTS". LOPEZ PORTILLO ADDED HIS SUGGESTION THAT THE USG ATTEMPT TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE AS PRUDENTLY AND SENSIBLY AS POSSIBLE, BECAUSE ITS TREATMENT OF THE CANAL ISSUE WILL BE AN IMPORTANT INDICATION OF AMERICAN POLICY TOWARD LATIN AMERICA. THOMPSON

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